

# Pollution, Health Needs Fuel Utah Anti-Coal Move

10 April 2007

[Power Market Today](#)

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All along the burgeoning Wasatch Front in **Utah**, from Salt Lake City south to Provo, air pollution and public health concerns are driving the state's political and health care leaders to call for a ban on building new traditional coal-fired electric generating plants. **Utah** currently relies on coal-fired plants for the bulk of its electricity needs, which are growing as PacifiCorp's Rocky Mountain Power Co. has been warning energy regulators and planners for some time.

For its part, Rocky Mountain Power has warned officials that if the utility cannot seek more coal-fired generation, it will be forced to get supplies from other sources, all of which will be more costly. Health care providers argue that some of the alternatives, such as wind-generated power, are no more costly; however, the utility stressed that wind power is only available about 30% of the time.

The focus on the fast-growing sprawl and corresponding increased air pollution comes from a report by the Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment. Doctors connected with the organization met late in March with Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., who has welcomed the report, according to local news media, and subsequent reports on a press conference held by the concerned physicians last week.

Among the report's recommendations is the ban on new coal-fired power plants because of mercury released from the plants, along with various clean transportation program recommendations.

While renewable energy and more energy efficiency programs can help address the problem, they aren't enough, according to a Salt Lake City-based spokesperson for Rocky Mountain Power. Even with all the energy efficiency and clean energy resources, the utility still believes it is "going to need electricity generation from coal- and natural gas-fired plants."

The governor and the head of the state's environmental quality agency won't rule out a ban on power plants as being needed in addition to new federal rules placing emissions restrictions on the plants.